

# 2008 NOAA Fisheries Employee of the Year Nomination Narrative

Nominee's Name: Last, First, Middle:

Nomination Category:

Stewart, Ian J.

Management/Scientific/Technical GS 11-15

**Address at Least One of the Following Factors in the Justification Below.**

**Contributions to NOAA and NOAA Fisheries programs that resulted in:**

**For Non-Management:**

- Enhanced economic viability of commercial and/or recreational fishing;
- Enhanced public appreciation for the mission of the agency;
- Enhanced safety or health of NOAA Fisheries workforce;
- Enhanced morale of the NOAA Fisheries workforce or inspired excellence in its members;
- Enhanced stewardship of NOAA Fisheries protected/managed species/associated habitats;
- Improved accuracy, reliability, or reproducibility of scientific results;
- Improved customer service;
- Increased efficiency and/or reduced cost of operations;
- Improved equal employment opportunity or diversity in NOAA Fisheries;
- Strengthened ties to other NOAA elements or NOAA Fisheries constituents; and/or
- Brought unusual credit to NOAA Fisheries or members of its workforce.

**For Management:**

- Demonstrated exceptional leadership, development of the workforce, and/or program management.

During the past year, Dr. Ian Stewart has demonstrated tremendous commitment to improving NOAA Fisheries' capabilities to provide reliable models and data for evaluating stock status, particularly for west coast groundfish. In addition to his normal workload, which included developing exceptional assessments, presentations, and scientific reviews, Dr. Stewart made significant contributions relating to use of the Stock Synthesis assessment platform and the development of improved historical catch time series.

Dr. Stewart was a prominent member of the team assessing the status of Pacific hake (or whiting) in early 2008, and again in 2009. This species is a highly important, trans-boundary stock shared with Canada, which accounted for roughly half of all the U.S. ex-vessel revenue derived from west coast groundfish landings in 2008. Also early in 2008, he conducted a highly successful 4-day training workshop at the NEFSC, focusing on the use of Stock Synthesis 2 and its applications to New England groundfish species. This workshop was an expanded version of a similar training session he conducted in Tasmania in 2007. In addition, following the initial development of Stock Synthesis, version 3, in 2008 by Dr. Richard Methot, Dr. Stewart voluntarily undertook the conversion of nearly all recent west coast groundfish assessment models to the new version. In addition to its tremendous value to other stock assessors, this effort allowed him to provide Dr. Methot with feedback that greatly aided the preparation of the model for general use in 2009. Further, he took the initiative to develop and support programming in the R language which provides output for improving model evaluation and problem diagnosis with Stock Synthesis. This code is now being supported through the Stock Assessment Toolbox program. Dr. Stewart also serves as the NWFSC representative on the NOAA Stock Assessment Toolbox committee.

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## Narrative (continued)

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Throughout 2008, Dr. Stewart served as the NWFSC coordinator for activities related to improving the availability and reliability of historical catch data for west coast groundfish species. This project, identified by the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee as a high priority, involves staff from both the NWFSC and the SWFSC as well as the state fishery agencies in California, Oregon, and Washington. In those west coast groundfish assessments where catch time series have been extended from the mid-1900s back to the early 1900s, the added length has proven to be extremely influential in estimating the size of the unfished population. The accuracy with which unfished population size is estimated is of critical importance, since this metric is integral to determining the current level of depletion, and hence whether stocks are in need of rebuilding or whether those under rebuilding plans have been rebuilt. Dr. Stewart has helped identify priorities for state and federal projects involving data from Oregon and Washington fisheries, and was instrumental in identifying two data sets which the NWFSC was able to have keypunched.

Also in 2008, Dr. Stewart developed a comprehensive internal review of survey design, sampling procedures and analysis methods for the NWFSC Southern California hook-and-line survey of rockfish species. He provided internal review of two articles by NWFSC authors, external peer review of 6 articles for fisheries journals, and he reviewed two drafts of the 2008 Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Condition Report. Dr. Stewart was lead author of a presentation at NOAA's 2008 National Stock Assessment Workshop and a poster presented at the 2008 Western Groundfish Conference. He also made presentations relating to stock assessment at the NWFSC's Survey Catchability Workshop, at a meeting of the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program staff and observers, and at the mini-workshop series co-sponsored by the NWFSC and the University of Washington. He serves on the graduate committee for one UW Masters student and gave a generous amount of his time to help an applicant for a NOAA-Sea Grant Fellowship refine his proposal. He is, in fact, exceedingly generous (and effective) in providing assistance to anyone who asks for it. Not only is Dr. Stewart highly productive, his commitment to teamwork and mentoring routinely improves the productivity of colleagues at the NWFSC and beyond. In his *spare* time during 2008, he spent more than a week collecting data as part of the NWFSC's bottom trawl survey and helped develop 3 interactive computer games involving population dynamics and fishery management for the Kid's Day activities at the NWFSC.